

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

SAJ-01 IO-10 ACDA-05 ARA-06 /082 W

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R 111745Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2805

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MPOL, GW

SUBJECT: GEORG LEBER ONCE AGAIN UNDER ATTACK

REF: BONN 8809, BONN 5764

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE DEFENSE MINISTRY AND, BY IMPLICATION,
DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER ARE ONCE AGAIN UNDER ATTACK
WITHIN THE SPD. THE LATEST CONTROVERSY CONCERNS THE
TRAINING OF A CHILEAN MILITARY OFFICER AT THE GERMAN
ARMY LEADERSHIP SCHOOL. WHILE LEBER'S POSITION AS THE
KEY SPD POLITICIAN ON DEFENSE MATTERS HAS NOT DIMIN-
ISHED, THE LATEST INCIDENT POINTS UP HIS DIFFICULTIES
WITH THE SPD LEFT-WINGERS. END SUMMARY

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1. AT A YOUNG SOCIALIST PRESS CONFERENCE SEPT. 8, AN SPD BUNDESTAG DEPUTY, DIETER SCHINZEL, ATTACKED THE DEFENSE MINISTRY FOR PERMITTING CHILEAN ARMY OFFICERS TO ATTEND THE GERMAN ARMY LEADERSHIP SCHOOL AT HAMBURG-BLANKENESE. ONE CHILEAN OFFICER IS NOW RECEIVING TRAINING. CALLING THE AFFAIR A "POLITICAL SCANDAL," SCHINZEL COMPARED IT TO THE CONTROVERSY RESULTING FROM GERMAN ARMY INSPECTOR GENERAL HILDEBRANDT'S ATTENDANCE AT A PARADE IN MADRID COMMEMORATING THE VICTORY OF FASCISM IN SPAIN (BONN 8809). THE "DISCLOSURE" THAT A CHILEAN OFFICER WAS RECEIVING TRAINING IN THE FRG FIRST APPEARED IN A WEST GERMAN COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER, UZ.

2. RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE, THE DEFENSE MINISTRY PRESS SPOKESMAN SAID THAT FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS OFFICERS OF NON-NATO COUNTRIES WITH WHICH THE FRG HAD DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS HAD BEEN ATTENDING THE ARMY LEADERSHIP SCHOOL. IN THE CASE OF CHILE, THE PROGRAM HAD NOT BEEN DISCONTINUED FOLLOWING THE 1972 MILITARY COUP.

3. THE NEXT DAY, LEBER PERSONALLY DEFENDED THE TRAINING OF A CHILEAN OFFICER AT THE LEADERSHIP SCHOOL AND SAID THAT HE WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRAIN OFFICERS FROM COUNTRIES THAT WERE NOT DEMOCRATIC BECAUSE IT EXPOSED THEM TO THE GERMAN ARMY. NONE OF THE PRESENT PORTUGUESE MILITARY, HE SAID, WOULD HAVE HAD EXPERIENCE WITH THE DEMOCRATIC ORIENTATION OF THE GERMAN ARMY IF THE FRG POLICY HAD BEEN TO REFUSE TRAINING FOR PORTUGUESE OFFICERS BECAUSE OF THE AUTHORITARIAN REGIME IN PORTUGAL.

4. ALTHOUGH THE LATEST DISPUTE MAY BLOW OVER, IT WILL NOT HELP LEBER'S STANDING WITHIN THE SPD WHERE CHILE IS A VERY EMOTIONAL ISSUE ALTHOUGH IT HAS DIMINISHED IN INTENSITY BECAUSE OF THE SITUATION IN PORTUGAL. A PRO-NATO AND PRO-ATLANTIC ALLIANCE SPOKESMAN, LEBER HAS

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NEVER GONE OUT OF HIS WAY TO AVOID A FIGHT WITH THE LEFT-WINGERS. FOR EXAMPLE, HE IRRITATED THE PARTY LEADERSHIP LAST SPRING WHEN HE WROTE AN ARTICLE IN FAZ ATTACKING THE LEFT-WING CRITICS OF US INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH EAST ASIA (BONN 5764). ALTHOUGH THE LEADERSHIP (ESPECIALLY CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT) WERE MORE IN SYMPATHY WITH LEBER THAN WITH HIS DETRACTORS, SOME FELT THAT HE WAS FOOLISH IN RE-OPENING THE VIETNAM DEBATE.

5. LEBER'S VOICE ON DEFENSE MATTERS HAS NOT BEEN DIMINISHED BY HIS DIFFICULTIES WITHIN THE PARTY. HE IS CONSIDERED AN EXCELLENT DEFENSE MINISTER. HIS STANDING AMONG PROFESSIONAL GERMAN MILITARY OFFICERS IS VERY HIGH. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE EXTREME LEFT-WING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FRINGE IN THE PARTY (WHO WOULD OPPOSE ANY DEFENSE MINISTER FRIENDLY TO NATO), THERE IS MOREOVER LITTLE CRITICISM OF HIS DEFENSE POLICIES AS SUCH.

6 HOWEVER, HIS INFLUENCE ON OTHER PARTY MATTERS HAS SUFFERED IN RECENT YEARS. SINCE 1973, HE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE PARTY EXECUTIVE BOARD BUT NOT OF THE SMALLER AND MORE IMPORTANT POLICY-MAKING PRESIDIUM. HIS NEGLECT OF HIS GRASS ROOTS SUPPORT COMBINED WITH THE ENMITY OF THE LEFTISTS INFLUENCED HIM TO DECLINE TO RUN FOR

ELECTION IN HIS OLD ELECTION DISTRICT AND TO SETTLE FOR THE LEADING POSITION ON THE HESSE LAND LIST WHICH IS INDIRECTLY ELECTED.

7. IN SUM, GEORG LEBER REMAINS A KEY POLICY-MAKER ON DEFENSE MATTERS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. HIS REPUTATION AS AN EFFECTIVE AND STRONG DEFENSE MINISTER IS AN ASSET THE SPD WOULD BE VERY CHARY TO LOSE IN AN ELECTION YEAR. LEBER REMAINS ONE OF THE SPD TOP LEADERS WITH AN ABSOLUTELY CLEAR PRO-NATO, PRO-ATLANTIC ALLIANCE LINE. HOWEVER, THE LATEST INCIDENT POINTS UP HIS DIFFICULTIES WITHIN THE SPD.
HILLENBRAND

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